

**City of Falls Church
Economic Development Authority
Business Meeting Minutes – APPROVED
Tuesday, September 9, 2014 – 7 p.m.
Falls Church City Hall – Dogwood Room
300 Park Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22046**

- I. Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chairman Novotny.

EDA Board Members Present: Mike Novotny, Erik Pelton, Kathy Hamor, Brian Williams, Ed Saltzberg, and Justin Berg.

EDA Board Members Excused: Barry Buschow.

ED Staff: Rick Goff and Becky Witsman.

City Staff: Gary Fuller, Paul Stoddard, and Mike Collins.

Public Attendees: City Council members Marybeth Connelly, Phil Duncan and Karen Oliver; Planning Commission Chair Ruth Rogers and PC Commissioner Lindy Hockenberry; Virginia Tech Professor Ralph Buehler; Paul Baldino (CACT); Peter Batten and Dick Buskell (Spectrum Development), Gary LaPorta, Victor Wong, Madeline English, Bob Ford, Doug Devereux, Lee Snitzer, Jane Singleton, Elena Toft, and other citizens.

- II. Approval of August 5, 2014 Minutes** – Ms. Hamor made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Berg, and approved by unanimous vote.

III. Petitions from the Public (5 minutes per petitioner):

Mr. LaPorta reported on his efforts to obtain a minimum of 350 orders for Little City license plates required by for the Commonwealth to approve the issuance of a special plate. He attends the Farmers Market to encourage registrants and he announces the program at many other events he attends. Thus far, 34 orders have been placed. The cost for the special plate is an additional \$10 per year.

Ms. Hockenberry announced that the Taste of Falls Church is taking place this weekend. She added that she recently visited National Harbor and was impressed with the design of the public green space near the Ferris wheel and thinks it has features worth emulating in Falls Church.

Ms. English (a Grove Avenue and 60-year resident of the City) spoke about the Mason Row project. She said that the management of stormwater and waste water at the proposed development site is inadequate to handle the density of the project. She criticized other features of Mason Row, including: inadequate

parking for retail; location of the condo building on Park Avenue; the proposed 'pork chop' traffic island at Grove Avenue and West Street (preventing left turns); the proposed traffic light at Park Avenue and West; additional volume of vehicles in and out of the development with anticipated traffic backups; and need for pedestrian crosswalks around the site.

IV. Petitions from the Board (5 minutes per petitioner): None

V. *Presentation: Bikesharing in the DC Region: Impacts on Businesses and Economic Development* (Professor Ralph Buehler, Virginia Tech)

Mr. Novotny introduced Prof. Buehler, explaining that his presentation represented a continuation of the EDA's educational efforts to generate interest in and support for cycling and bikesharing programs in the City. Mr. Novotny remarked that a previous EDA meeting had been devoted to the Capital BikeShare program, with the operator of the system as a featured speaker.

Prof. Buehler provided background about himself and his work, including a book he co-authored, City Cycling. He said that his presentation would cover trends in cycling, 'Bikeshare,' and available evidence on economic benefits of cycling and bikeshare.

Prof. Buehler explained the primary reasons why governments promote cycling and provided data on cycling's share of work commuters in Western Europe and North America. He compared major metro areas in North America for percentages of bikeshare commuters in 1990 and 2011, noting a huge increase in popularity during that time. He also showed data for increased bicycle commuters in Washington, DC and adjacent jurisdictions, as well as the demographics of cyclists in the DC region.

Prof. Buehler discussed measures proven to increase cycling as a commuter option in urban areas, including bikeshare, bike infrastructure (e.g., bike networks and traffic calming measures). He highlighted the many benefits of bikesharing: flexible mobility; emission reductions; individual financial savings; reduced congestion and fuel use; health benefits; and multimodal transport connections (the 'last mile'). He summarized some of the specific features, logistics, and fee structures of bikeshare programs. Data was provided on the main purposes of bikeshare trips in the DC region and demographics of Capital Bikeshare (CaBi) users.

Based on Prof. Buehler's study of CaBi users at five stations in DC, data was provided about consumer spending by cyclists. A survey of businesses near the five stations was also summarized. While data from businesses on CaBi-related sales impacts was sketchy, survey results reflect positive perceptions of the program for neighborhood quality of life metrics. Few reliable studies exist, Prof. Buehler summarized, that do more than generalize about the economic benefits of cycling.

Prof. Buehler answered questions about his presentation, CaBi and assessing the potential for the program in Falls Church. He said the first step in an analysis would be determining where cycling trip origins and destinations occur into and out of the City to identify the right number and location of bikeshare stations here. Customer on bike will travel only two to four blocks from a bikeshare station for shopping, according to the DC study.

Prof. Buehler speculated that public subsidy would likely be necessary to sustain the program in Falls Church, as it has elsewhere. However, he noted, the 60-70% cost recovery rate for CaBi is higher than for public roads and mass transit systems.

Mr. Stoddard reported that he had recently spoken with his transportation planning counterparts in Arlington County. They told him that if Falls Church establishes a CaBi program, it move higher in priority the County's connection of its existing CaBi services to the East Falls Church Metro station. He also said that Arlington indicated they might have an interest in managing a CaBi program in the City.

Mr. Novotny reminded the board that CaBi in the City would have an ongoing cost of about \$1,800 per month for every set of 15 bikes, in addition to the initial installation cost of \$50,000 to \$60,000 for each 15-dock station. These figures had been provided in an earlier presentation to the EDA by the operators of CaBi.

VI. *Report: Purposes of Increased Transit Service (Paul Stoddard, Senior Planner, City of Falls Church)*

Mr. Stoddard responded to a board member suggestion that the EDA petition City Council to provide annual funding support for a CaBi program in Falls Church. He said further analysis would be needed of the costs and demand for CaBi to address concern that another failure, such as GEORGE, would not result.

A motion was made and seconded to have planning staff study further the feasibility of bikesharing in the City in light of staff's report that Arlington County would install CaBi at the East Falls Church Metro station sooner if Falls Church commits to the program. Also further study is warranted because Arlington has expressed interest in managing a Falls Church CaBi program and the bikeshare effort supports City's lifestyle vision. The motion was approved unanimously.

The board reviewed a memo prepared by Mr. Stoddard about the purposes of increased transit service in the City. They confirmed that the City's Transportation Master Plan policy guidance text aligns with their thinking about multiple transit modes and approaches in the City. Mr. Williams suggested that transit systems for the City be designed to serve workers and customers coming into the City, as well as residents accessing Metro.

VII. New Business

a. Referral from City Council: Mason Row Mixed Use Development Proposal (Corner of West and Broad Streets)

Mr. Pelton prefaced discussion of this business item by disclosing that his wife and brother-in-law own a business affected by the proposed development project. He also disclosed that he resides in the general neighborhood of the development site. He said that with these disclosures he is confident that he can participate in the project review and recommendation process without bias as to outcome.

i. Presentation from Spectrum Development Team; Questions and Answers

Mr. Batten and Mr. Buskell presented a Power Point that highlighted the proposed project's fiscal impact, pedestrian-oriented design, retail program and physical layout, voluntary developer concessions, traffic management and planning, and many other features. Questions were asked and addressed about price points for condo sales and apartment rent. The developers and staff responded to questions about the project's anticipated impact on the City's public school population.

The developers discussed the possibility of a dine-in movie theater concept, where it would be located, and how it would impact parking demand. They described outdoor event space in the site plan, and other park-like features of the project. Mr. Batten and Mr. Buskell provided greater detail about retail tenant prospects.

Mr. Novotny thanked the development team for their presentation and complimented them on project improvements from earlier conceptual forms. He made a number of suggestions for further project improvements, many of which were included in the EDA's subsequent motion of support. Other items that he identified were reducing the average size of dwelling units, providing affordable space for local retailers, more vented space for restaurants, more specific language regarding the undergrounding of utilities, and screening of the emergency generator on site. He concluded his remarks by saying that overall, "It's a great project."

ii. Board Feedback and Recommendation

The EDA approved the following motion by unanimous vote:

The EDA Board of Directors strongly supports the Mason Row project and encourages approval of Spectrum Development, LLC's applications for a Comprehensive Plan amendment, rezoning, and a special exception for mixed-use development. The primary reasons cited by the Board in its endorsement are that the proposed project:

- *Is located at a prime site and a strategic intersection along W. Broad Street, and near the W&OD Trail. The project embraces the trail amenity, and efforts should continue to strengthen those connections.*
- *Features density appropriate for its location.*
- *Consolidates 11 lots and four acres of land, an assemblage consistent with EDA land use objectives.*
- *Will replace land uses that generate less than \$200,000 in annual net revenue for the City with estimated net revenue ranging from \$1.4 - \$1.7 million per year.*
- *Will improve stormwater management of the site.*
- *Creates a new regional destination in the City that has the potential to attract shoppers and visitors from surrounding jurisdictions, increasing the positive net economic impact of the project for the City.*
- *Contributes about \$2,024,000 in cash for school capital expenses.*
- *If the project does not occur, future consolidation of these properties for redevelopment is highly unlikely.*

In addition to its motion of support for the Mason Row proposal and applications, the Board offers the following suggestions for further project improvements:

- The developers should pursue creative ways to incentivize local businesses to relocate back into the new project.
- The developers should commit to providing a location and funding for a BikeShare station on the project site should the City move forward with a BikeShare program. In return, the City should consider reducing by an appropriate number the parking spaces otherwise required for the project.
- A 20-foot-wide sidewalk along West Street to better accommodate pedestrians and outdoor dining.
- The developers should take appropriate measures to assure that the new Mason Row street does not become a convenient cut-through option for traffic seeking to avoid the Broad and West intersection or to access Grove Avenue.

- Underground parking spaces should be designed with 8.5 - 9 feet of clear width (i.e., free of obstructions, including support columns).

b. Any Other New Business: None.

VIII. Old Business: Summary of EDA Grant Requests for 2014-15

Mr. Goff reviewed a table summarizing \$20,078 in grant requests received for the EDA's 2014-15 program year for seven programs or events. Due to the lateness of the hour, the board decided to table discussion of the grant requests until their October 7, 2014 meeting.

IX. Staff Reports: No reports due to the lateness of the meeting.

X. EDA Member Reports: None.

XI. Other Business: None.

XII. Adjournment – A motion was made to adjourn, which was seconded and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 p.m.